

# THE VOICE IN THE FOG

Drawing by A. B. Wenzell

By HAROLD MacGRATH

## CHAPTER XII

**L**LEFT Thomas scrambling about the mosaic lobby of the theater for his opera hat. When he recovered it, it resembled one of those accordions upon which vaudeville artists play Mendelssohn's Wedding March and the latest ragtime (by request). Someone had stepped on it. Among the unanswerable questions stands prominently, Why do we laugh when a man loses his hat? Thomas burned with a mixture of rage and shame,—shame that Kitty should witness his discomfiture, and rage that, by the time he had retrieved the hat, the ghost had disappeared.

However, Thomas acted as a polished man of the world, as if eight-dollar opera hats were mere nothings. He held it out for Kitty to inspect, smiling. Then he crushed it under his arm (where the broken spring behaved like an unlatched jack-in-the-box), and led the way to the Killigrew limousine.

"I am sorry, Mr. Webb," said Kitty, biting her lips.

"Now, now! Honestly, don't you know, I hated the thing. I knew something would happen. I never realized till this moment that it is an art all by itself to wear a high hat without feeling and looking like a silly ass."

He laughed, honestly and heartily, and Kitty laughed, and so did her mother. Subtle barriers were swept away, and all three of them became what they had not yet been, friends. It was worth many opera hats.

"Kitty, I'm beginning to like Webb," said her mother later. "He was very nice about the hat. Most men would have been in a frightful temper over it."

"I'm beginning to like him too, Mother. It was cruel, but I wanted to shout with laughter as he dodged in and out of the throng. Did you notice how he smiled when he showed it to me? A woman stepped on it. When she screamed I thought there was going to be a riot."

"He's the most guileless young man I ever saw."

"He really and truly is," assented Kitty.

"I like him because he isn't afraid to climb up five flights of tenement stairs, or to shake hands with the tenants' themselves. I was afraid at first."

"Afraid of what?"

"That you might have made a mistake in selecting him so casually for our secretary."

"Perhaps I have," murmured Kitty under her breath.

**A**LONE in her bedroom, the smile left Kitty's face. A brooding frown wrinkled the smooth forehead. It was there when Celeste came in; it remained there after Celeste departed; and it vanished only under the soft, dispelling fingers of sleep.

There was a frown on Thomas's forehead too, bitten deep. He tried to read, he tried to smoke, he tried to sleep, futilely. In the middle of the banquet, as it were, like a certain Assyrian king in Babylon, Thomas saw the Chaldaic characters on the wall: whenever he looked, written in fire, Thou fool!

## CHAPTER XIII

**T**WO mornings later the newspapers announced the important facts that Miss Kitty Killigrew had gone to Bar Harbor for the week, and that the famous uncut emeralds of the Maharaja of Something-or-other-ipur had been stolen,—nothing correlative in the departure of Kitty and the green stones: coincidences only.

The Indian Prince was known the world over as gem mad. He had thousands in unset gems which he neither sold, wore, nor gave away. His various hosts and hostesses lived in mortal terror during a sojourn of his; for he carried his jewels with him always, and often, whenever the fancy seized him, he would go abruptly to his room, spread a square of cobalt-blue velvet on the floor, squat in his native fashion beside it, and empty his bags of diamonds and rubies and pearls and sapphires and emeralds and turquoises. To him they were beautiful toys. Whenever he was angry they soothed him; whenever he was happy they rounded out his happiness. They were his variant moods.

He played a magnificent game. Round the diamonds he would make a circle of the palest turquoises. Upon this pyramid of brilliants he would place some great ruby, sapphire, or emerald. Then his servants were commanded to raise and lower the window curtains alternately. These shifting contrailights put a strange life into the gems: they not only scintillated, they breathed. Or perhaps the pyramid would be of emeralds; and he would peer into their cool, green depths as he might have peered into the sea.

He kept these treasures in an ornamented iron chest, old, battered, of simple mechanism. It had been his father's and his father's father's; it had been in the family since the days of the Peacock Throne, and most of the jewels besides. Night and day the chest was guarded. It lay upon an ancient Ispahan rug, in the center of the bedroom, which no hotel servant was permitted to enter. His five servants saw to it that all his wants were properly attended to, that no indignity to his high caste might be offered; as having his food prepared by pariah hands in the hotel kitchens, foul hands to make his bed. He was

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thoroughly religious. The gods of his fathers were his in all their ramifications; he wore the Brahman thread about his neck.

He was unique among Indian Princes. An Oxford graduate, he persistently and consistently clung to the elaborate costumes of his native State. And when he condescended to visit anyone it was invariably stipulated that he should be permitted to bring along his habits, his costumes, and his retinue. In his suite or apartments he was the barbarian; in the drawing room, in the ball room, in the dining room (where he ate nothing), he was the suave, the courteous, the educated, oriental. He drank no wines, made his own cigarettes, and never offered his hand to anyone, not even to the handsome women who admired his beautiful skin and his magnificent ropes of pearls.

Someone had entered the bedroom, overpowered the guard, and looted the bag containing the emeralds. The Prince, the lightest of sleepers, had slept through it all. He had awakened with a violent headache, as had four of his servants. The big Rajput who had stood watch was in the hospital, still unconscious.

All the way from San Francisco the police had been waiting for such a catastrophe. The newspapers had taken up and published the story of the Prince's pastime. Naturally enough, there was not a crook in all America who was not waiting for a possible chance. Ten emeralds, weighing from six to ten carats each,—a fortune, even if broken up.

**H**AGGERTY laid aside the newspaper and gravely finished his ham and eggs. "I'll take a peek into this, Milly," he said to his wife. "We've been waiting for this to happen. A million dollars in jools in a chest you could open with a can opener! Queer ginks, these Hindus. We see lots o' fakers; but this one is the real article. Mebbe a reward. All right. Little ol' Haggerty can use the money. I may not be home to supper."

"Anything more about Mr. Crawford's valet?"

Haggerty scowled. "Not a line. I've been living in gambling joints; but no sign of him. He gambled in the ol' days. Sometime or other he'll wander in somewhere an' try to copper the king. No sign of him round Crawford's ol' place. But I'll get him—it's a hunch. By-by!"

Later the detective was conducted into the Maharaja's reception room. The Prince, in his soft, drawing English (far more erudite and polished than Haggerty's, if not so direct), explained the situation, omitting no detail. He would give two thousand five hundred dollars for the recovery of the stones.

"At what are they valued?"

"By your customs appraisers, forty thousand. To me they are priceless."

"Six to ten carats? Why, they're worth more than that."

The Prince smiled. "That was for the public."

"I'll take a look int' your bedroom," said Haggerty, rising.

"Oh, no; that is not at all necessary," protested the Prince.

"How d'you suppose I'm going to find out who done it, or how it was done, then?" demanded Haggerty, bewildered.

A swift oriental gesture.

The hotel manager soothed Haggerty by explaining that the Prince's caste would not permit an alien to touch anything in the bedroom while it contained the Prince's belongings.

"Well, wouldn't that get your goat!" exploded Haggerty. "That lets me out. You'll have to get a clairvoyant."

The Prince suggested that he be given another suite. His servants would remove his belongings. He promised that nothing else should be touched.

"How long'll it take you?"

"An hour."

"All right," assented Haggerty. "Who's got the suite across the hall?" he asked of the manager as they left the Prince.

"Sir Henry Monckton. He and his valet left this morning for Bar Harbor. Back Tuesday. A house party of Fifth-ave. people."

"Uhuh." Haggerty tugged at his mustache. "I might look around in there while I'm waiting for his Majesty to change. Did y'ever hear the likes? Bughouse!"

"But he pays a hundred a day, Haggerty. I'll let you privately into Sir Henry's suite; but you'll waste your time."

"Sure he left this morning?"

"I'll 'phone the office and make sure. Sir Henry left shortly after midnight. His man followed early this morning. Sir Henry went by his host's yacht. The man went by rail."

"What's his man look like?"

"Slim and very dark and very quiet."

"Well, I'll take a look."

The manager was right. Haggerty had his trouble for nothing. There was no clue whatever in Sir Henry's suite. There was no paper in the waste baskets, in the fireplace; the blotters on the writing desk were spotless. Some clothes were hanging in the closets; but these revealed only their fashionable maker's name. In the reception room, on a table, a pack of cards lay spread out in an unfinished game of solitaire. All the small luggage had been taken for the journey. Truth to tell, Haggerty had not expected to find anything; he had not cared to sit idly twiddling his thumbs while the Maharaja vacated his rooms.



In the bathroom (Sir Henry's) he found two of that aroused his silent derision,—a bottle of brilliantine and an ointment made of walnut juice. Probably Sir Henry was a la-di-da chap. Bah!

**O**NCE in the Prince's vacated bedroom, Haggerty went to work with classic thoroughness. Not a square foot of the room escaped his vigilant eye. The thief had not entered by the windows; he had come in the room by the door that opened on the corridor. He stood on a chair and examined the transom sill. The dust was undisturbed. He inspected the keyhole, sniffed, stood up, bent and sniffed again. It was odor totally unknown to him. He stuffed the corner of his fresh handkerchief into the keyhole, drew it out and sniffed that. Barely perceptible. He wrapped the corner of the handkerchief, and put it back in his pocket. Some powerful narcotic had been forced into the room through the keyhole. This would account for the Prince's headache. These orientals were as free as the Dutch; they never opened their windows for fresh air.

Beyond this faint, mysterious odor there was nothing. The first step would be to ascertain whether this was occidental or oriental.